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DELTA VARIANT IS 40% MORE INFECTIOUS THAN ALPHA: UK

British authorities said the Delta strain is 40% more virulent and leads to twice the number of hospitalisations than Alpha

DATA SHOWS VACCINATED ARE PROTECTED

While Delta was first found in India, Alpha preceded it and was detected in the UK initially. Health secretary Matt Hancock said of the 9,427 cases in hospital due to Delta in the last two days, only seven (0.07%) were from the fully vaccinated group. However, Britain's former health advisor Neil Ferguson pegged the Delta strain's virulence at 60% higher than Alpha

CABINET TO DECIDE ON UNLOCK ON JUNE 14

- Amid an intensified vaccination drive, the Delta variant would figure on top of the June 14 Cabinet meeting to decide on unlock
- The Alpha variant was estimated to be 40-80% more infectious than the Covid samples collected in November last year
- Britain's R-rate, or rate of infection, has risen over the past week

>50%
OF ENGLAND'S POPULATION HAS BEEN FULLY VACCINATED

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Hurt BSY creates flutter with will quit as CM remark

Sends strong message to detractors within state unit, party central leadership

THE TIMELINE

- **MARCH 31:** RDPR Minister KS Eshwarappa drops a letter bomb, writes to Governor Vajubhai Vala against Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa
- **APRIL 16:** Yediyurappa gets admitted to hospital for Covid reinfection
- **APRIL 18:** The Governor steps in to monitor Covid situation in Karnataka
- **MAY 26:** Minister CP Yogeeshwara and MLA Arvind Bellad visit Delhi to meet Central leadership
- **MAY 27:** Yogeeshwara makes jibes of nepotism against Yediyurappa
- **MAY 30:** 20 MLAs meet the Chief Minister to extend support, demand Yogeeshwara's ouster from cabinet
- **JUNE 6:** Yediyurappa says he will resign if asked to by Central leadership

ANUSHA RAVI @ Bengaluru

FOR a man who has refused to respond to any personal attack against him by own party members, BS Yediyurappa on Sunday created a flutter claiming that he would resign as chief minister if the party central leadership asks him to.

Replying to a question on attempts and lobbying from within the party to unseat him, Yediyurappa said that he will continue as chief minister only as long as the BJP central leadership has confidence in him. "The day they tell me to quit, I will. Then, I will involve myself in working for the welfare of the State. There is no confusion from my end. They have given me a chance and I am trying to execute the responsibilities to the best of my abilities. The rest is left to the Central leadership," he said, setting off a domino effect that led to a host of BJP leaders batting for him to continue as chief minister till the completion of his term.

Belagavi MLA Basangouda Patil Yatnal has been relentless in his attack against Yediyurappa and his son and state party vice-president BY Vijayendra, while Water Resources Minister CP Yogeeshwara has openly made allegations of nepotism against the chief minister. But the BJP central leadership has not taken any action against the two leaders, triggering rumours of leadership change in the State.

"He is clearly hurt. Yatnal has been let off with a notice, RDPR Minister KS Eshwarappa writes a letter to Governor Vajubhai Vala alleging Yediyurappa's highhandedness but doesn't face any consequences, MLAs go and lobby against him in New Delhi and ministers like Yogeeshwara openly make personal attacks against him, but the party takes no action. It is affecting his morale," said a source close to the chief minister.

CONTINUED ON: P3

Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa pays homage to former CM D Devaraj Urs on his 39th death anniversary at Vidhana Soudha, in Bengaluru on Sunday | EXPRESS

Twitter will not lose legal cover, contend experts

KANU SARDA @ New Delhi

AMID the ongoing face-off between the Centre and social media platforms, legal experts opined that the latter would not be liable directly for messages posted by users on their websites, in view of Section 79 of the Information and Technology Act, 2000.

Microblogging site Twitter was on Saturday served a final notice to comply with the new IT rules that mandate the platform to appoint India-based compliance and grievance officers among other clauses, failing which it will face consequences.

But Supreme Court advocate K V Dhananjay said, "If we assume that Twitter loses protection under Section 79, even then it does not automatically suffer because user A posts a message that user B thinks is defamatory to him. User B simply cannot rush to a criminal court against Twitter on the ground of criminal defamation." He reasoned that "if Twitter cannot be shown to be specifically aware of such content on its website, it cannot be imputed with criminal intent. Unless a criminal court is prima facie satisfied with Twitter intentionally hosting the content in question, it cannot issue summons to Twitter to stand trial, as police investigations do not happen in criminal defamation cases. So, Twitter losing intermediary status only plays out slowly and the consequences may not be visible for quite some time".

As the law stands

Section 79 of the IT Act protects intermediaries if they unknowingly host illegal or unlawful content. When alerted about any objectionable content through a court order or by the Centre, they are expected to remove it

Domain expert and lawyer Akur Raheja said, "Though the government is right now concentrating on giant social media companies only, the scope of new intermediary guidelines is wide enough to bring in its preview many SMEs as well like domain/hosting or other small online companies. Many of them could be unaware of the compliance requirements right now."

Another Supreme Court lawyer D K Mahant cited messaging platform Telegram's case, which he fought before the Delhi High Court. "There have been various litigation against Telegram, including a copyright lawsuit, which I fought before the Delhi High Court this January. Telegram undertook before the high court to not only remove the identified content but also any future content within 48 hours of Telegram being informed of the copyright infringement. Hence, in my view the provisions are working, the intermediaries are following them," he added.

PACKETS OF RELIEF

A volunteer arranges parcels of food to be distributed among the needy at Kranthiveera Sangolli Rayanna Railway Station, during the statewide lockdown, in Bengaluru on Sunday | SHIVAKUMAR BK

ANNOUNCE SECTOR-SPECIFIC RELIEF PACKAGES, SAYS SJM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM), an affiliate of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, on Sunday urged the Centre to announce relief packages for sectors facing stress due to the pandemic.

In a resolution at its two-day national council meeting, the SJM also expressed concern at the astronomical cost of cost of medicare at private hospitals. Private healthcare providers should realise this is not the time for making profits, and ensure treatment with minimum cost, the outfit said.

Its resolution also sought enhanced fund allocation for the rural jobs scheme, called the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), which was conceived during the UPA regime and mocked at initially by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The outfit also demanded that the government come out with specific packages for varous sectors affected by the pandemic, including construction, fishing and horticulture.

Incentives for MSMEs

The SJM also sought a package for employment linked incentives to strengthen the MSME sector, adding the RBI should announce need-based moratorium to suit every sector and direct the banks for liberal monetary support

"The SJM firmly believes that the mayhem caused by the pandemic can be overcome only by concerted efforts of every section of the society. In this unprecedented difficult situation of the country, the SJM suggests to consider and extend fiscal support to the vulnerable sections of the society in addition to free food grains, besides substantially increasing the fund allocation for MGNREGA to support rural employment," it said.

Crematoriums under Clean Ganga could have offered dignity to dead

RICHA SHARMA @ New Delhi

HUNDREDS of Covid-19 victims whose bodies were thrown into the river Ganga or were buried in the river banks could have got a dignified final farewell if only the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) had finished constructing crematoriums along the serpentine river in time.

The NMCG was sanctioned to construct 33 ghats and crematoriums at a cost of ₹833 crore in Bihar and UP under the Centre's ambitious Namami Gange Programme.

A majority of these projects were sanctioned between 2016 and 2019 with a target to complete them by March 2021.

But an analysis of the progress data available with the NMCG shows that just over 51% of the projects have been completed. In the rest, work is either still in progress or tenders are being floated for identifying the contractors.

Of the 33 projects, 17 have been completed, 13 are under progress, two are in the tendering stage while one is yet to be tendered. Eighteen of the ghats and crematoriums are in Uttar Pradesh and 15 in Bihar.

Last month, bodies of suspected Covid patients were found floating in the Ganga. The decomposed bodies were first found in Bihar's Buxar but later more were discovered in UP districts also.

Although an inquiry is still under way to ascertain the cause, it is suspected that the existing crematoriums in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh could not take the load of the pandemic victims and the bodies had to be thrown into the river.

Days after the bodies washed ashore, hundreds of bodies were found loosely buried in the river banks in Unnao and Badohi districts of UP, begging the question that had the ghats and crematoriums been completed, would the suspected Covid victims be insulted in death.

The bodies were found in six districts of UP — Mirzapur, Kanpur, Prayagraj, Varanasi, Ballia and Ghazipur — and three of Bihar: Buxar, Saran and Patna.

CONTINUED ON: P10

STATUS CHECK

33
Total ghats & crematorium projects in UP, Bihar sanctioned

₹833 cr
FUNDS ALLOCATED FOR THE PROJECT

PROGRESS OF PROJECTS

	UP	Bihar
Fully completed	13	4
75-99% work done	1	3
50-75% work done	1	1
25-50% work done	-	3
Less than 25% work	1	3

Tendering process on for 2 others; not even that for one project

STATE-WISE BREAKUP OF GHATS & CREMATORIUMS IN FIVE GANGA STATES

State	Total	Completed	Work in progress	Tendering process
Bihar	15	4	10	1
UP	18	13	3	2
West Bengal	29	24	5	-
Jharkhand	4	3	1	-
Uttarakhand	13	11	1	1

Manipal Hospitals to get Sputnik V vaccines

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

MANIPAL Hospitals has tied up with Dr Reddy's Laboratories to incorporate Sputnik V vaccine in their existing vaccine list, comprising Covishield and Covaxin.

The rollout of Sputnik V at Manipal Hospitals in Bengaluru is part of the soft launch by Dr Reddy's Labs in Hyderabad last month. The vaccines are likely to be made commercially available in the latter half of this month.

Karthik Rajagopal, Chief Operating Officer, Manipal Health Enterprises, said, "The hospital chain has conducted vaccination drives with Covishield and Covaxin. We will continue the effort with Sputnik V."

CONTINUED ON: P4

State shows positive signs towards recovery, but deaths remain a worry

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

IN a small but significant way, there is something to cheer about on the Covid-19 front. The State's positivity rate dipped marginally from 8.81 per cent on Saturday to 8.80 per cent on Sunday.

This is for the first time that a drop in Covid-19 test positivity rate (TPR) has been recorded since April 4 when the rate was as low as 4.63 per cent. The number of patients testing positive for every 100 tests conducted (positivity rate) kept rising since that day.

Health Department officials have attributed that to an increase in the number of tests, which now totals 3,06,00,450 (3.06 crore) since the pandemic struck Karnataka in March second week last year.

The State Government has already announced that lockdown restrictions will be relaxed once the positivity rate dips below 5 per cent. Health officials say this may just be the beginning of a decline towards that mark.

A health worker pours sanitiser into a boy's palm after collecting his swab in Bengaluru on Sunday | SHIVAKUMAR BK

KARNATAKA	JUNE 5	JUNE 6
Fresh cases	13,800	12,209
Recoveries	25,346	25,659
Deaths	365	320

Officially, all indicators point towards an improved situation over the next few days, except for the mortality rate which has been on the up consistently for the past few weeks.

The daily addition to Covid cases has seen a huge drop. While 12,209 cases were added to the tally on Sunday, the highest addition that the State saw through the pandemic was on May 5 when a whopping 50,112 cases were recorded in a single day. The following two days saw 49,058 and 48,781 cases, respectively.

The number of active cases (patients currently under treatment) saw a fall from the peak of 6,05,494 cases on May 15 to 2,54,505 as on Sunday – a span of three weeks.

Even the recovery rate has shown a robust uptick.

The state's recovery rate had reached a high of 98.05 per cent on January 31, but fell to a low of 69.83 per cent when the second wave intensified. However, it rose to 89.38 per cent on Sunday.

What has kept the health officials worried is the high number of deaths on a daily basis across the State.

P6

JAB-O-METER

TAKE YOUR SHOT
June 5: 31,20,451 doses
June 6: 33,53,539 doses
TOTAL DOSES: 23,13,22,617

NATIONWIDE	JUNE 5	JUNE 6
Fresh cases	1,20,529	1,14,460
Recoveries	1,97,894	1,89,232
Deaths	3,380	2,677

WITH THIS ISSUE
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Day after, Delhi hosp nixes ban on Malayalam

SOMRITA GHOSH @ New Delhi

A day after its offensive circular directing Keralite nursing staff not to speak in Malayalam at work created an uproar, the Delhi government-run GB Pant Institute of PG Medical Education and Research Hospital on Sunday revoked the order and launched a probe to contain the damage. Shortly after the order was revoked, the Delhi Malayali Nurses Committee called off its proposed agitation.

Saturday's order had barred Kerala nurses from speaking in Malayalam at work, citing the inconvenience caused to patients who could not understand the language. The order had advised the nurses to stick to only Hindi and English or face serious action. Nullifying the order, medical director R Anil Kumar said: "It was issued by the Nursing Superintendent without knowledge of the hospital administration and the Delhi government."

Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Shashi Tharoor took to Twitter to slam the order. While Rahul called for stopping language discrimination, Tharoor said it 'crude, offensive'.

According to a senior nurse, the order was issued after two staffers spoke in Malayalam about a therapy in the presence of another nurse, who could not follow them. "We only talk to other people from Kerala in Malayalam at the hospital. This is the first time such an order has been passed," said Jeemol Shaji, general secretary of the nurses' union in LNJP Hospital.